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## I'll See You at the Clinic this Flu Season

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*By Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman (SW/AW/FMF) Scott Thrasher, Hospital Corps Planner, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED)*

As the flu season rapidly approaches, I wanted to take a moment and remind all Sailors, Marines, and family members of their responsibility to receive the annual vaccination that will soon be available. As a preventive medicine technician, well schooled in all immunization and vaccination programs, I can speak confidently about the safety of this initiative.

This vaccination will provide protection from a variety of influenza viruses that are out there and I'm happy to report that you'll only need to get one vaccination this year as both the H1N1 and the seasonal flu vaccines have been combined. I would say that getting only one vaccination that has a lot of protective benefit against several strains of the flu

virus is a pretty good deal. More importantly though, in order to protect all of our personnel from unnecessary illness, it is mandatory for all active duty military personnel, selected Reserves and health care workers to receive the vaccine.

Contrary to some widely held beliefs, influenza is not comparable to the common cold and carries with it some potentially severe consequences if contracted. Influenza viruses are, most assuredly, a threat to the operational readiness of our Sailors and Marines.

Two years ago, while deployed at sea onboard an aircraft carrier in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, our ship fell victim to the H1N1 virus prior to the introduction of the vaccination. Despite the best efforts of the entire crew, 286 Sailors had to be quarantined, resulting in over 1,400 lost man-hours during critical combat flight operations.



Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Eric M. Garneau prepares to administer an H1N1 flu vaccine aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) while the ship is under way in the

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Atlantic Ocean Dec. 5, 2009. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Anthony Sisti/Released)

The 2011 seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that researchers believe will be the most virulent this year and, depending on your demographic information, everyone can expect to receive either an injection or dose of spray administered via the nose. Shipments are beginning to arrive with more expected by the end of September. I encourage all personnel to receive their vaccination as soon as they are made available at your sites.

Remember, we cannot take care of others if we fail to take care of ourselves. See you in the clinic!

For more H1N1 and Seasonal Flu information, visit [http://www.med.navy.mil/Pages/Flu\\_H1N1\\_Info.aspx](http://www.med.navy.mil/Pages/Flu_H1N1_Info.aspx).

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